

Dear Assistant Clerk Committees,

INQUIRY INTO THE FIREFIGHTERS' PRESUMPTIVE RIGHTS COMPENSATION AND FIRE SERVICES LEGISLATION AMENDMENT (REFORM) BILL 2017

My name is Matthew MacGillivray, currently a staff fire-fighter at Ballarat City Fire Station, having recently transferred from Mildura Fire Station having spent the past year there after my recruit course with the Country Fire Authority.

Previous to my employment with the CFA I was a volunteer fire-fighter in South Australia with the Country Fire Service, starting as a junior at 11 years old, taking an active fire-fighting roll at the age of 16 and continuing in my service as a volunteer for 10 years before achieving my dream of becoming a career fire-fighter.

I'm often asked why I joined a Victorian fire service, in particular the CFA, instead of joining a fire service in South Australia. There are several reasons for this, the more important ones being:

- The reputation that precedes the CFA career staff
- The ability to continue in fighting bushfires
- The chance to continue to work with volunteers

I really enjoyed being a volunteer and wanted to continue working with people who were passionate about serving the community. In South Australia the relationship between the SACFS (volunteer only service) and the SAMFS (paid only service) is one of mutual, professional respect, one that I expected to enter into as a career fire-fighter with the CFA.

I'm sure you can imagine my disappointment when my first day on station in Mildura started by reading a local newspaper article (on the front page) of a local volunteer brigade Captain talking about how his brigade were prepared to fight mine and my colleagues pay and conditions to the death. This sort of abuse, fear mongering, and disrespect from the volunteers towards the staff, whose main concern is for the safety of the community, has continued for over the past year, and I believe it is the integration model that has led to this.

As previously mentioned the volunteer and paid services in South Australia are completely separate, and in my experience working as a volunteer bordering with paid brigades this allows for this separation of interest so that both services are allowed to operate to their full potential without being hamstrung by whether or not the staff or volunteers object to what the other service is doing. This has allowed for the best service to be provided to the community in both the regional and metropolitan areas, where the community is put first above all else.

The other reason I believe the reform should be passed is that it is a way forward. If it is knocked back then we will be exactly where we were 2 years ago, with the fire services being used for political gain and the public stoush between the staff and volunteers continuing. This does not benefit the fire service (both volunteer and staff members), the politicians, and most importantly the community that all the previously mentioned

have promised to serve. This is the only state that still operates with an integrated model, and the only state where fire-fighters are carrying out protests on the parliament steps and running media campaigns against each other. Surely something needs to change so we can focus on our main role: providing our community with a world class fire service.

Thank you very much for your consideration in this matter.

Kind regards,

Matthew MacGillivray